

VBH BOT FYI BZ

From: Robert Kosin [rkosin@barringtonhills-il.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, August 24, 2010 8:00 AM
To: Dolores Trandel
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Unkempt property triggers battle
Bill Grimes
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SHUMWAY – When Derrick Kuhlman moved to Shumway in 1999, he was attracted by its tranquility.

“I moved into this town because it was a quiet, peaceful little town,” said Kuhlman, who came to Shumway from Altamont.

But a dispute between the Shumway Village Board and residents who have received letters ordering them to clean up their property has cut into the town’s normal sleepiness with the subtlety of a jackhammer. The dispute has led to two raucous village board meetings this summer and led to no small amount of ill feeling.

Village Clerk Derrick Helmbacher said the board has sent out about 30 letters this summer on the heels of inspections by the Effingham County Health Department. Some of the letters referenced unlicensed vehicles, while others focused on unkempt lawns or items in yards considered unsightly.

Kuhlman said residents began to get upset when one letter was sent to a 93-year-old woman on the north side of town who had been having trouble finding somebody to mow her lawn.

“This board is more interested in sending letters than helping the community,” he said. “There’s not any reason that somebody from the village can’t just help that lady out by mowing her lawn.”

Former board member Jim Flack said the letters show a lack of willingness by the board to be responsive to its community.

“The board is just out of control,” Flack said. “These letters are just overkill.”

Owen Wasson, who grew up in Shumway, placed a sign on his mother’s property in the 300 block of West Main Street that hints of a potential recall effort. The sign, which says “Impeach The Board,” is the first of several signs that may soon be highly visible in the village, he said.

Wasson doesn’t understand why board members don’t contact residents in person to explain the situation – and the 2009 nuisance ordinance.

“My father (the late Darrell Wasson) was village clerk in the ’70s and they would go to people and tell them if there was a problem,” he said.

But Village President Dave Thies said the personal touch hasn’t been working.

“People are asking why we don’t just talk to everybody in person, but that just doesn’t work,” Thies said. “What we get is the ‘I’m not cleaning my yard until that guy cleans his.’”

Thies said there’s more support for enforcing the nuisance ordinance than has been evident at recent board meetings.

“I believe there’s a lot of people who would like to see the town cleaned up, but they haven’t been coming to the meetings,” he said. “The people who got the letters are the ones who have been upset.”

Wasson, who owns a septic tank business, said Shumway is actually one of

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the cleaner small towns in the area.

"If they want to clean up Shumway, that's good and fine, but to be honest, Shumway's one of the nicer towns I've been to," he said.

Helmbacher said the board is doing nothing more than trying to enforce an upgraded nuisance ordinance passed last year.

"I think the board is trying to dutifully fulfill its obligation," he said. "The board just wants the town to be successful as a nice, pleasant place to live."

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Population 217 [2000 Census]